

Child Protection Policy

Policy Statement:

At Lifepointe Baptist church we firmly believe that every child matters deeply to God and deserves a safe and meaningful life. This is why we are committed to safeguarding the social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of all children, young people and families in our care. This commitment includes proactively nurturing a child safe culture and working environment.

All our staff and volunteers understand the role they share in upholding this commitment, and everyone is empowered and equipped to champion a child safe culture in bringing hope to a young generation.

Scope:

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability or family or social background have equal rights to protection from harm and abuse. The royal commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse advises that a child safe organization has competent and committed leadership and governance which develops and maintains a child safe culture. Lifepointe is committed to making all levels of its organization aware of and abide with its Child Protection Policy.

This policy applies to all employees and volunteers (working with children). It requires a commitment to shared personal responsibility to ensure children are protected from all forms of harm and abuse, and an undertaking to consider the opinions of young people, children and parents, to enhance our child protection practices and procedures.

Commitment:

We will:

1. Take preventative action by having a regularly reviewed Child Protection Policy in place, supported by a communications strategy to relay changes and updates
2. Work proactively to raise child safety awareness in the areas we operate, and implement/enhance policies and procedures to mitigate risk;
3. Respond immediately and appropriately where child safety concerns arise;
4. Empower everyone including children and parents, to have a say in our efforts to enhance child safe practices and procedures;
5. Foster a culture of transparency that supports all persons to safely disclose harm, or risks of harm;
6. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing principles while keeping child safety as the overriding consideration;
7. Review, and continuously improve, our recruitment screening practices to safeguard selection of only the most suitable people to work with children;

8. Report suspected harm, abuse, neglect or mistreatment without delay to the appropriate authorities;

9. Comply with relevant legislation;

10. Adhere to the Standards and applicable recommendations as detailed in the Final Report – Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Summary of the 10 Royal Commission Child Safe Standards:

Standard 1. Child Safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture

Standard 2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

Standard 3. Families and communities are informed and involved

Standard 4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account

Standard 5. People working with children are suitable and supported

Standard 6. Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused

Standard 7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training

Standard 8. Physical and online environments minimize the opportunity for abuse to occur

Standard 9. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved

Standard 10. Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe.

Recruitment and Selection of volunteers

Lifepointe undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all employees and volunteers.

To be able to serve in a children's ministry at Lifepointe you must:

- Have been attending Lifepointe Baptist Church for at least 6 months
- You must have a blue card
- You must have completed the Safety Management Online Childsafe training before working with kids
- You must have completed a leader application form
- You must have had an interview with the coordinator of the ministry you are serving in
- Be committed to attending a Lifepointe Sunday service regularly
- Adhere to the volunteer's code of conduct policy and child safe guidelines

Our Recruitment and screening processes aim to:

- Promote and protect the safety of all children and young people under the care of Lifepointe Baptist;
- Identify the safest and most suitable people who share Lifepointe's values and commitment to protect children and young people; and
- Prevent a person from leading or working with children if they pose a risk to children or young people.

Risk Management

All activities associated with our children's programs must be entered into our Safety Management Online system by the coordinator of the activity. The activity must be approved by Lifepointe's childsafe coordinator before the event can proceed.

Reporting

Disclosures of Harm

A disclosure of harm is when a child directly divulges that they are a victim of or in danger of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or neglect. Alternatively, an adult may divulge that they have participated in the physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or neglect of a child. In either case, no matter how plausible the claim is, when someone makes a disclosure of harm the reporting process must begin immediately.

In such instances, if a child or young person has disclosed or appears to disclose this information the child must be informed about the limits of confidentiality, purposes for which the information is obtained, and how it may be used. Wherever practicable it is preferable for this to be done prior to the child's disclosure.

Process for a volunteer Receiving Disclosure of Harm

- Inform a staff member or team leader immediately, even if this involves interrupting the disclosure. Volunteers are not trained in how to receive disclosures or how to follow through the harm reporting process and therefore are not permitted by Lifepointe to receive a disclosure of harm one on one.
- Follow the instructions of staff/team leader
- At this point the volunteer essentially carries no more responsibility on the matter but is expected to continue to cooperate with Lifepointe leadership and law enforcement if they require further information.

A staff member receiving a disclosure of harm should follow these steps:

- Find a location where you are within sight of others but out of earshot
- Explain your obligation to report if harm has or could occur
- Let the child talk and don't ask questions. If possible, take a few notes or record the conversation on the provision that the child knows this is happening.
- Never try to conduct your own investigation, never give advice nor try to solve the problem on your own. Begin the reporting process immediately
- Complete a disclosure of harm report including informing the senior pastor or church council member noting the date and time of your call on the form

References

- Volunteer's code of conduct policy
- Leader application form
- Childsafe – safepeople, safe programs coordinators guide
- Childsafe – safepeople, safe programs team leaders guide
- Childsafe – safepeople, safe programs team members pocket guide